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OPINION

THE RECORD

Action on Darfur

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Friday, July 22, 2005

EDITORIAL BY THE RECORD

A SMALL but determined group of senators has fought for more than a year to try to stop the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan by focusing U.S. attention and aid on the crisis.

They were heartened this week by a victory. The bipartisan group, which includes Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., succeeded in including \$50 million for African Union peacekeeping troops in a spending bill that is expected to pass the Senate in coming days.

The African Union troops, which now number more than 3,000, should increase to almost 8,000 by the end of September. That is by no means enough for a region the size of Texas, but the increase is a step in the right direction. Much more needs to be done.

Yesterday, Mr. Corzine and Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., also introduced the "Darfur Peace and Accountability Act" that would fund more African Union troops, create a U.S. envoy to Darfur, and increase sanctions against Sudan. Rep. Donald Payne, D-Newark, introduced the measure in the House.

It deserves immediate attention.

One year ago today, Congress declared what is happening in Darfur to be genocide, thanks to Mr. Corzine and others, who see an obligation to act. "When there is a genocide taking place," Mr. Corzine said, "it is not just in our national interest to act. We have a moral responsibility."

He is right. Despite President Bush's recent pledge at the G-8 summit to increase aid to Africa, Darfur has not been a high priority of his

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administration.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in Sudan yesterday to press for an end to the killing in Darfur and to hold the government of Sudan accountable. Human rights groups say up to 300,000 people, including many children, have died in Darfur since 2003 and almost 2 million people have been displaced.

Her visit was welcome, but Ms. Rice must be much more vocal and visible in her concerns about Darfur. And Mr. Corzine and his colleagues must continue their admirable efforts to insist on a U.S. obligation to act in the face of evil.

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